

"King's Children" at Its Dress Rehearsal

Sights and Comments at an Interesting Function at the Metropolitan.

The dress rehearsal of a new opera at the Metropolitan is an interesting function. It is not formal. No etiquette prevails in regard to dress. Society is conspicuous by its absence, but the world of musical, literary, critical and painting folk is in the orchestra seats, and special corners in the dress circle and balcony, pre-empted by the knowing ones for rare acoustic properties, are also filled with

and behind the scenes generally, where you are admitted just before the curtain rises. Alfred Hertz, who leads, is mopping his brow with a Santa Claus handkerchief and admits his nervousness, which is of an altruistic sort, for in addition to the ambition he feels on every such occasion is the desire to have his friend's work properly presented. Mr. Hertz years ago first brought out "Hansel and



"ARE WE DEAD OR ALIVE?"

a punctuality which marks music lovers who are afraid of losing one note of the score.

Admission to the opera house is by invitation only, and requests for places begin to pour in at the business office as soon as it is known that the date of the premiere has been announced, the final rehearsal taking place a few days before that event.

The dress rehearsals of "Armed and Dangerous" and "The Girl of the Golden West" were interesting occasions, but that of Mr. Humperdinck's latest creation, "Koenigs-Kinder" (King's Children), was more popular than either. Possibly this may have been because it took place on Christmas morning, but whether the reason was the holiday spirit which sends one forth to enjoy in the company of one's fellow man or the special interest attached to the opera, it is certain that if a delectable hand had passed over the crowd gathered to enjoy the occasion there would have been great mortality of celebrities. During the intervals between acts every tenth person was pointed out by the nine others as having accomplished some wonder, and "Merry Christmases," were uttered in every tone of the social scale, awe, admiration, congratulation, dignity and respect.

A very distinct atmosphere of the Waterland prevails in the dressing rooms



THE GOOSE GIRL.

Gretel in Germany, and since then between him and Mr. Humperdinck there has been a very close friendship.

"It is all beautiful," he says, when asked to specify some part superior to the rest, "and in the third and last act I consider Herr Humperdinck to have struck the highest note of his musical career. I predict for it a great success."

"Greater than that of 'The Girl of the Golden West'?" is asked, and Herr Hertz, never overloquacious in discussing operatic matters, waves a baton as if suddenly remembering a forgotten duty. He does stay for a word of farewell. "I intend to do my very, very best." Then he departs.

Secretary Centanni wears a worried look. He admits that the rumor that one of the *Goose Girl's* flock had suddenly disappeared might lead to investigations which might involve several of the Tonic members of the company, for the German preference for roast goose for Christmas dinner is well known. A messenger comes just as Secretary Centanni

squawk when Mr. Hertz forgets to give them a warning gesture, they are probably the best behaved and best trained flock of geese ever seen on the Metropolitan stage. They have become so accustomed to the flashlight that they do not make them turn a feather, they are indifferent to publicity and respond less alertly to the kind word than to the grain of corn.

A sudden hush of the hum of voices in the orchestra proclaims the beginning of the dress rehearsal. You slip into your dark corner and note one of the most beautiful stage settings of the operatic season. You stay to yourself as picture after picture is unfolded, as the present is blotted out and only the nursery hours remain in the memory, "the dear brothers Grimm." For after all with the musical setting aside there is the simple story unrolled, page by page, before the mature eyes of the dress rehearsal audience.

Herr Engelbert Humperdinck at his first appearance in America at Daly's Theatre, introduced by Sir Augustus Harris of Covent Garden fame as "Mr. Humperdinck," does not look unlike the fancied pictures of one of the Grimm brothers. He has the big spectacles, the kindly face and the shy, sensitive manner, except when he is talking to children, that people associate with them on account of their fairy tales.

A little Miss Humperdinck is one of the objects of attention during the entr'acte. She is the flaxen haired maiden, with her funny little coils of hair over the ears, the sensitive face and the big blue eyes that you would expect to accompany her father.

Mr. Caruso is busy sketching celebrities in one of the orchestra chairs. Mr. Scotti complains of a heavy cold to a crowd of sympathizers. Walter Damrosch occupies a place near the stage and is enthusiastic over the music, if his hand-clapping that greets Herr Humperdinck's appearance is to be credited.

Signora Toscanini looks very handsome



THE DELICIOUS MOMENT OF MEETING AMATO.

is telling you all about it and reports that the missing bird has been found and properly censured.

After the opera is all over, when a second visit is made to the back of the stage several of the children who appeared in the performance admit that the absolute precision of the behavior of the geese has been rather a disappointment to them. Excepting for the natural dramatic instinct to stand in the centre of the stage all the time and the occasional

in a spangled net over loss of wine-chiffon, and when she converses with Mrs. Gattica (Frances Alda) it is difficult to accord the apple of choice. Mrs. Farrar, mother of the prima donna, is becomingly groomed in black satin and wears a pearl necklace with diamond pendant to break the severity of her costume. She looks young enough to excuse her daughter's lack of years. Miss Constance Collier, soon to make her regular American appearance in "Trelawney of the Wells,"

has a bit of color which brings out her brunette beauty in the scarlet camellia she wears. Miss Marbourg, one of the newer singers of the Metropolitan staff, who has been one of the favorites of the Brussels operagoing public for several years, chatters French with M. Amato.

Mrs. Gortrud Atherton is in the interested though that promenades the foyer, and Miss Kitty Cheatham, whose recital for and to children takes place two days after the dress rehearsal, is discovered in a dazed centre of sound making arrangements with the composer who has consented to play the accompaniments for the Humperdinck songs included in her programme.

In the foyer musical phrases replace social gossip during this entire act. One celebrity speaks of Gorwitz's performance, saying that as the Fiddler he is, as

song is heard. And so all is said and done. That is to the lookers on from the auditorium. Back stage there is a scene of confusion and on the grassy mound where Farrar and Jadowick died so gracefully but a moment before they are now posed ready for the flashlight artist. The geese have had their pictures taken but are waiting about hoping for a second tryout.

Farrar lifts her head to ask, "Are we dead or alive?" and being assured that she is a corpse ducks again to position. Jadowick poses his poetic legs with great care and the Fiddler waits with the geese his coming pose.

In the dressing room of the prima donna there is the usual scene of congratulatory enthusiasm from a crowd of friends who have been waiting to offer holiday and rehearsal felicitations.

"How did you keep the snow out of your mouth?" asks one practically.



GERALDINE FARRAR HOLDING COURT.

always, perfectly satisfying. "He is the most thorough stage artist on the operatic stage to-day. He couldn't sing badly if he wanted to."

It is Farrar's greatest part. She need not long for the role of *The Girl of the Golden West*. After all Fate is a great balancer, even on opera programmes.

"I love the horn theme which denotes the coming of the wanderer, crown, the

"And I the melody describing the wreath of flowers." The picture of the third and last act is that of a scene of peace. The mound on which the *Prince and Goose Girl* once sat side by side among the flowers is now covered with drifted snow. The trees are heavily weighted with its burden. Its soft violence is in the air, and passing through the light the flakes are transformed into fairy diamonds. The little but is dark and drear, its roof carpeted with a pure white thatch. Some snowbirds circle about and fall. There is a note of sorrow in the orchestra.

Hungry and cold, the wanderers barter their decesses, the golden crown, for the poisoned bread and as the snow, ever increasing in weight and force, slowly buries them beneath its mantle, slowly and surely covering first one, then the other, the last of the wanderers, the *Prince and Goose Girl*, and as the latter are carried out on the floor the success, a rose glow flashes across the horizon, the light peaks out a bit of gold, a silver thread, an opalescent point. The Fiddler's last

"I didn't swallow lots of it. It doesn't hurt," answers Mrs. Farrar.

"I don't see how you help laughing at the geese!"

"I don't. I laugh all the time. I can't help it. No, they don't eat stage grass. It is corn they are looking for. We keep them hungry between times and sprinkle the corn about so as to have their minds occupied. It is much easier to train geese than artists."

You manage to get your own question in as you perch on the edge of the divan, where Mrs. Farrar has thrown herself, using a coat for a pillow, her head banded by beds of violets, orchids and narcissus.

"What do I especially like about it? Oh, its simplicity," she says. "It's so gentle and sweet and though we die we do it so politely and without fuss. Every time I sing the last song 'There is no death, for I love you, I have queer little lumps in my throat. I suppose I won't after a while, but you know I have only rehearsed it ten days and it is still new to me."

How do I condense its meaning? Just the same old lesson that we all know and suffer from, that the viewpoint of the idealist must always clash with that of the world. That only children and poets know the truth and they are powerless against the weight of materialism; that we are destined to our parts in the world's great drama; that it must have its poets and children in spite of its cruelty to them, and if we stoop to better our brightness but the poisoned bread, the madness and death repay us for our mistake."

I am sorry that I could not create the part of the *Goose Girl* in Germany, but I am to sing it over there when I return in the spring."

The Queer Little Box

An Eastern Scheme of Vengeance.

"Hello, my bold Ralph," cried Judge Josiah Marcellus to the young sailor who stood twirling his cap by the desk. "Back again, safe and sound, hey, from the glowing East? I'm glad to see you."

"Don't go, Cronkite," this is young Purvis, son of the housekeeper at the Underglades, and like her devoted to the Merediths. He's an able seaman, and a very able one too. I warrant, aboard the full rigged iron ship *Dingo*, which makes such famous runs in the East India trade.

"What can I do for you, my lad?" "You told me, Judge, to let you know if I ever caught sight or sound of Mr. Jim," Ralph began hesitatingly.

"Bless my soul, so I did," reflected the Judge, his face settling into concern. "Is it possible that vicious creature still lives to hate and plot? Sit down, Ralph, sit down, and do you, Ah, give the closest attention."

"You must remember something of that mysterious life at the Underglades, two years ago. It burst out without apparent cause in the room where Fritz Meredith lay bedridden. The doors had all been fastened.

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"Of course it was hushed up, but there is no doubt that James Meredith was the perpetrator of the outrage. He fled across the seas, we all hoped forever. 'Insane or revengeful,' sir," asked the detective.

go down there in some capacity. Let me think; what was it I heard from that nice jolly girl? Oh, yes, she wrote that her father insisted on her having a houseful of company and that there was going to be a masked ball for them this Friday night and wouldn't I lend dignity to the occasion.

"Let me see, that will be day after tomorrow. I think I will just go down right away. Abe, with Ralph, so as to advise me when I come. His mother and he between them will manage to find some place for you in the house where you will attract no notice and be able to discern and disconcert the slightest move on the part of this infernal villain."

"Tell your mother, Ralph, that I depend upon her and you. Mr. Fritz Meredith must not be alarmed and I would not mar my pretty Madge's pleasure for anything."

Among the decorators, caterers, musicians and additional servants who now thronged the old house at the Underglades the presence of so reserved and retiring a man as Abe Cronkite attracted little or no notice. Mrs. Purvis vouched for him and that was sufficient to enable him to come and go as he willed, without other comment than that this quiet Mr. Rylance was employed by the fat and asthmatic housekeeper to keep a sharp eye on everything.

"Exactly; it couldn't be better," agreed Cronkite. "Keep it up, Mr. Sloum. Excite his jealousy all you can. Don't you see I am playing for time. I know that his motive in coming here is to work revenge on Fritz Meredith, but I don't yet know how he plots to work it. I would confuse and divert this motive, thus causing him to hesitate and perhaps betray himself."

"I do see. You figure that he will get so mad with me that he will forget for the time being how mad he is with Mr. Meredith. All right, the job suits me. Besides Mr. Meredith may not think my scant pay and small fortune a detriment if I am so lucky as to help save him from harm."

"It isn't Mr. Meredith alone, but the household of young people gathered for innocent enjoyment."

"True, there are self-cooking revolvers that keep spitting out bullets. Of course it is all surmise; you can't know just what this mad fellow may or may not do. But your inference, I believe, are correct. By concentrating his rage upon me not only will Mr. Meredith be protected, but Madge and her guests will be saved from chance harm. By the way, wouldn't it be better still if I were out of the house?"

A good time, as you say, to avoid any possible infection with the bubonic plague."

"I fear your little laid plans have gone awry, Abe," said Judge Marcellus dissatisfiedly, when after his arrival at the Underglades he listened to Cronkite's report.

"Say rather, sir, that they haven't come to a head as soon as I anticipated," replied the detective patiently.

"He kept that queer little box, wrapped in Eastern course cloth with him, sir. Suppose that it is filled with dynamite." "Bless my soul, it might well be, do you think so?"

am. Now, then, what do you want me to do, my man? I am at your command."

"You are always too good to me, Judge," replied Cronkite with a genuine feeling. "Now then to business. You can take an important part, indeed a most important part, for we both earnestly wish, don't we, that that bedridden old man upstairs, that all those jolly young folks down stairs, shall be kept from even a suspicion of alarm."

"Go then, to the bathroom; hark, the music already is sounding. Lead directly to the festive scene. You will not find Miss Meredith and Mr. Sloum there for the present at least. I depend upon you to keep their absence from comment or even a note."

Cronkite was right. The lovers were not present among the festive scenes which the Judge was about to adorn with his dignity. They were seated side by side on the bench in the grove to all appearances deep in confidential talk. As Sloum at the expected sound in the clump of trees in the rear, he looked back and caught a glimpse of a figure, fantastic, lurking and listening, he threw his arms around Madge, drawing her face to his breast.

rope rove into a running noose, to pull the death head's masque from its face. The feeble rays struck the tawny skin, the haggard lineaments, the deep-set eyes, which with silent intensity, were on the face of the lascar, James Meredith.

Cronkite waited on the landing below until Meredith had adjusted the noose in his arm and the rope ends in his left hand. He waited until he had less than a foot of rope between him and the door ajar; then even as he drew himself up, a frenzied spring he was up and upon him, his arm and the rope ends in his left hand. He waited until he had less than a foot of rope between him and the door ajar; then even as he drew himself up, a frenzied spring he was up and upon him, his arm and the rope ends in his left hand. He waited until he had less than a foot of rope between him and the door ajar; then even as he drew himself up, a frenzied spring he was up and upon him, his arm and the rope ends in his left hand.

Cronkite stepped out into the hall. He raised the box gingerly at arm's length, yet with silent intensity. Then with an awed nod he called Sloum to him.

"Listen," he said, "I was right. Look! He was lurking in the closet. Exposed a trap that might have ruined you!" "Don't you see?" he gasped. "He would have made it bite you."

He had the uncle who had benefited him so much and forgiven him so often because his uncle would not hear of his marrying his pretty cousin Madge, Fritz Meredith's only child. Besides he would come into a contingent inheritance of his